

**Testimony for Appropriations Committee**  
**Health Subcommittee**  
**Public Hearing re: H.B. No. 5037 AN ACT ADJUSTING THE STATE**  
**BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE 30, 2023**  
**Susan Sarmiento**  
**The Governor's Prevention Partnership**  
**February 24, 2022**

My name is Susan Sarmiento, and I am a parent of two children and a Program Coordinator with The Governor's Prevention Partnership. I live in Hartford as a proud neighbor from Behind the Rocks. I am here today in support of prevention funding, which supports organizations like mine and the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services.

Today I come to you representing the many parents and families that struggle every day with the results of drug and alcohol use in our city and testify on the impact that The Governor's Prevention Partnership Trainings has had in many communities.

In my work at Evergreen Oriented Family Tree in New Haven, the experience of talking about prevention with parents and young people about the importance of having conversations with their children or loved ones was very important for the group. They came to reflect on the tragedy of their parents' addiction, and how they may not have lost custody of their kids if they had known about the Prevention services that we provide. We also reflect on the great effort they make daily to reconnect with their community families, to find and keep a job, and not be judged or marginalized in their community.

Over the past couple of months, I led prevention conversations after two overdose incidents that shook the community. It's created so much anxiety for parents. They're asking - what is going on in our communities? What can I do to prevent this situation with my children? We emphasize the great importance of talking about substances with

their children. A mother told me, "I don't feel ready to have this conversation with my young daughter, but I know it's necessary."

These situations underscored the need for our organization to create bilingual resources and materials, lead conversations, and use different platforms to reach multiple groups.

I know that the Prevention programs that we offer make a tremendous difference in the lives of our community because it brings hope and, more importantly, education to the communities that need it most. As parents, we have a unique responsibility to bring awareness to these issues, especially when our children are exposed to so much at a young age. I want to thank you for your commitment to supporting and funding prevention organizations, such as The Governor's Prevention Partnership, for the future of our state.